

Sanders Ideology Throughout Time Ava Dziadzio

Beneath the surface of the widely recognized political figure Bernie Sanders is a complex web of ideologies, psychologies and experiences that have deeply shaped his version of democratic socialism. To truly understand him necessitates an exploration of the figures that have shaped his education, and his own lived experiences (as a Jewish boy who grew up relatively poor in Brooklyn, New York). Sanders’ policies are erected upon the historical and philosophical ideas of crucial figures, including [Eugene Debs](#) and [Karl Liebknecht](#), whose works Sanders read at various points in his life. Bernie Sanders largely rides on the coattails of such innovative thinkers and has developed a strength in his convictions of his policies that has translated to political prowess.

Yet, what has largely defined Bernie Sanders’ political career has been his ability to take the foundational principles of those before him and masterfully transcend boundaries, engaging a young and energized demographic of voters behind his core ideologies. In so doing, Sanders has modernized and Americanized his predecessors, sculpting a version of democratic socialism that has proven profound in the modern age, aligning itself with current frustrations and national challenges. Young voters have found themselves sympathetic with the causes Sanders champions, such as income equality, Medicare for all, free college education and climate change provisions. Bernie Sanders’ ability to blend the intellectual roots of his own thinking into American reform movements to contextualize and modernize his ideology has been a cornerstone of the success of his political endeavors.

An interesting exploration of how Bernie Sanders’ principles have transcended boundaries and proven applicable in current times emerges through the intersection of politics and sports. Both prior to and after the death of George Floyd in March of 2020, using sports as a platform to voice political beliefs became highly contentious in the American media, with influential political figures and celebrities alike voicing their opinion on the matter. Donald [Trump famously shamed Colin Kaepernick](#) for kneeling during the national anthem, and Fox News host [Laura Ingraham bashed LeBron James](#) for discussing political matters during a post-game television interview, stating her disinterest in hearing the political opinions of “someone who gets paid \$100 million a year to bounce a ball.” On the other end of the spectrum lies Bernie Sanders, who has applauded athletes for using their platform to promote the issue of racial justice in our nation, [stating that](#) “the players... have the right to make their point and I appreciate their standing up for what they believe.”

Bernie Sanders’ ideologies rest upon the belief that if you live through something, you know what it is you’re talking about, regardless of your level of education or societal status. [Sanders has consistently defended the idea](#) that an individual doesn’t need a PhD in sociology to know that labor inequality is problematic, or a degree in economics to understand that students emerging from college crippled with student debt is destructive. This sentiment reigns true in helping to understand why exactly Bernie Sanders stood up in defense of athletes using their platform to highlight social injustice, as the lived experiences of black Americans in the United States informs their outrage, regardless of their stance in the political community. Sanders’ stance also aligns with general sentiments of the political left, who, attitudinally, have consistently championed people who rise from the bottom on the basis of their own experience. Furthermore, Eugene Debs, who is arguably the most influential figure in shaping Bernie’s political outlook, was a staunch advocate of being part of something larger than yourself, as well as enthusiastic rebellion against those marginalizing others by way of their own concentrated wealth and power. Debs’ first-hand experiences with the plight of

railroad labor led him to advocate for retaliation against exploitative institutions and organizations, as he stated in a [1918 anti-war speech](#) that “...they who have the moral courage to stand erect and assert their convictions; stand by them; fight for them; go to jail or to hell for them, if need be —they are writing their names, in this crucial hour—they are writing their names in faceless letters in the history of mankind.”

Such sentiments were crucial in forming Bernie Sanders’ political outlook, as both Sanders and Debs championed the idea that individuals must be courageous in their convictions of what is right and wrong to stand up to injustices and avoid being stuck in a cyclical pattern of marginalizing situations. As such, while Sanders’ political ideologies have largely emerged from historical thinkers, he has found a way to modernize his policies to stand the test of time, proving applicable to modern movements such as [Occupy Wall Street](#) and [Black Lives Matter](#). As with his reference to how athletes in the United States using their platform to stand up against racial injustice, Sanders has skillfully found a way to craft his ideologies and deeply held convictions so as to make them applicable to the present-day perils of American society.

